

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000064

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/03/2030

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [SY](#) [JO](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY DISCUSSES IRAQ AND SYRIA WITH
TURKISH CHOD

Classified By: Ambassador Eric S. Edelman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: At their Jan. 3 meeting, Deputy Secretary Armitage told Turkish General Staff Chief GEN Hilmi Ozkok that his most recent visit to Iraq made him more optimistic about the January 30 elections there. He outlined steps that were being taken to reach out to Sunni Arabs, to improve security, and to convince the Kurds to reverse their decision to boycott elections in Kirkuk. He asked Turkey to support a statement calling on full participation in elections occurring on time at the meeting of Iraq's neighbors on Jan.

16. He also suggested that Turkey use its influence with Damascus to encourage more responsible Syrian behavior. Ozkok evinced suspicion of Kurdish intentions in the north, concern about Sunni participation in the Jan. 30 elections; and, doubts that Syrian President Asad was as in command as he tried to project. End summary.

12. (C) During their Jan. 3 meeting in Ankara, Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage and Turkish General Staff (TGS)

SIPDIS

Chief GEN Hilmi Ozkok agreed that the US and Turkey shared the same overall goal in Iraq. "Your success is our success," Ozkok said. The Deputy Secretary noted that Turkey and the US were working together for success and, in that vein, it was important to consult and, especially for public opinion, to be seen as consulting.

Iraq Elections

13. (C) Having just visited Iraq, the Deputy Secretary provided Ozkok with his assessment of the situation. Deputy Secretary Armitage said that he had asked PM Allawi, who he

SIPDIS

met in Amman before traveling to Iraq, what he was doing to reach out to Sunni Arabs. Allawi provided a sober presentation, describing his meeting with various tribal and political leaders. All were arguing for a delay in the elections, but could not explain what they would do during the interim to ensure a successful outcome. Their lack of a plan led Allawi to the conclusion that there was no point in a postponement.

14. (C) The Deputy Secretary said that he came away from his meeting with the IECI impressed with Iraqis' courage and commitment, and feeling better about the prospects for successful elections that he had before. He admitted that Ninewah (Mosul) and Anbar remained problem areas, but even in these provinces elections were still possible: for example, more troops were being dispatched to Mosul to improve security, and easier-to-secure voting places outside of urban centers were being discussed for Anbar.

15. (C) The Deputy Secretary explained that he had changed his itinerary in order to talk to Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) leader Masood Barzani about his threat to boycott the Kirkuk provincial elections. He told Barzani in a direct manner we would be very unhappy if the KDP forced elections in Kirkuk to be postponed. Although the Deputy Secretary said that he was not sure whether he convinced Barzani, US observers at the session judged that Barzani's position softened as a result. In fact, the KDP leader told the press after the meeting that "we will find a compromise" on Kirkuk.

16. (C) Ozkok responded by saying that TGS shared the Deputy Secretary's assessment in large part. He noted that there is

SIPDIS

a danger of the Kurds pushing their aim for an independent Kurdistan too far, but he believed that they will act responsibly in the end. On Kirkuk, the Kurds seek a delay in the elections because they have failed to alter the ethnic balance in the province. However, the future of Kirkuk should be decided by all Iraqis. Ozkok believed that the US could convince Barzani, who he described as straightforward and stubborn, "to do the right thing." Similarly, he thought the US had leverage with Sunni Arabs to convince them to participate in elections. The Deputy Secretary agreed, but added that we were looking to friends like Turkey and Jordan to speak publicly about the need for Iraqis to participate. All of Iraq's neighbors, with the possible exception of Iran,

appeared prepared to support such a statement at their Jan. 6 meeting in Jordan. PM Allawi has said that he would like a statement that calls on all Iraqis to participate in elections held on time.

17. (C) Ozkok asked whether the US had a plan in the event there was little Sunni participation in the elections. The Deputy Secretary said that there was no "plan B." Polling data showed that with adequate security significant Sunni participation was possible in Baghdad and Ninewah; Anbar was more difficult, he allowed. NEA Assistant Secretary William Burns added that Sunni participation is likely to be lower than that of Kurds and Shia, but still significant if security is sufficient.

Security Forces

18. (C) PM Allawi learned two lessons from the operations in Fallujah, Deputy Secretary Armitage reported. First, he received much less "political blow-back" than he expected. The lesson here was that the PM should use his authority more, the Deputy Secretary explained. Second, he appointed competent people who were succeeding. The lack of leadership has been a problem for the security forces, the Deputy Secretary said. The IIG was considering bringing back former

SIPDIS
regime officers to address this problem, but their loyalty was uncertain. Ozkok said what Iraq needed was a developed armed forces. The Deputy Secretary disagreed, saying that police were needed to take the lead. Ozkok noted that in Turkey, the police and the Jandarma are called in first, but then Turkish governors have the option of turning to the military for help. In Iraq, Ozkok doubted that the police alone would be enough.

Mosul and Syria

19. (C) The Deputy Secretary asked what TGS was hearing from its liaison officers with Task Force Olympia (TFO) in Mosul. Ozkok said that he has heard of a build-up of coalition forces and unconfirmed media reports that the coalition plans to arm Kurds to allow them to protect themselves. He assumed that a military operation would begin soon "to calm the city" after the influx of insurgents following the Fallujah operation. He said that Turkey wanted the situation calm before elections, but added that any movement of troops especially from the north could have a bad effect on the local Turkmen, Arabs and other non-Kurdish ethnic groups.

110. (C) The Deputy Secretary said that the insurgents arrived from not only Fallujah, but also Aleppo. The previous day he had met with Syrian President Asad and told him that the Syrians must do more to stop the flow. He told the Syrians, he said, that they cannot just wait for the US to provide information on these individuals, but should use their own intelligence to go after these people. The bottom line of the message to Asad was that the road to better relations with the US lay through Baghdad.

111. (C) Ozkok replied that the Syrians are suspicious about what kind of future awaits Iraq. This causes them to hedge their bets. "If everything is clear, they may be more cooperative." But if they believe that the US is going to pull out of Iraq soon, then they will be less so. Also, there are two groups in the government in Damascus; although Asad wants overall control, he doesn't have it completely. If Asad's hand were strengthened, Ozkok stated, Syria would be more cooperative. Damascus asks for Ankara's help in improving relations with the US, so there is a prospective for better relations, he noted. The Deputy Secretary responded that we take satisfaction with your relations with Syria that have come a long way from five years ago when Turkey amassed troops on the border. "It gives you influence" in Damascus, he concluded.

Participants

112. (SBU) Ozkok was joined by TGS/J5 Lt Gen Aydogan Babaoglu, TGS/J3 LTG Metin Yavuz Yalcin, TGS/J5 Strategy Dept Chief MG 113. Cengiz Arslan, MFA Americas DG Selahattin Alpar, and his aide COL Tayyar Sungu. With the Deputy Secretary in addition to A/S Burns were the Ambassador, EUR Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Jones and PolMilCouns (notetaker) and acting DATT LtCol Joseph Collins.

113. Deputy Secretary of State Richard L. Armitage has cleared this cable.

114. Baghdad minimize considered.

